(c) whether the fifth Antarctica expedition plans undertaken an indepth study of earlier incomplete research projects or any new research programmes?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AND IN THE DEPARTMENTS OF OCEAN DEVELOPMENT, ATOMIC ENERGY, SPACE AND ELECTRONICS (SHRI SHIVRAJ PATIL): (a) Scientific achievements of the last four Indian expeditions to Antarctica include the following:

(i) Creation of the requisite infrastructure and facilities in Antarctica and the establishment of a permanent station in Antarctica for scientific work throughout the year;

(ii) Establishment of communication links between India and Antarctica through satellite and HF;

(iii) Continued investigations in various disciplines of Polar Science;

(iv) By virtue of the scientific work done during the expeditions, India acquired the status of a Consultative Party in the Antarctic Treaty mechanism and has also been unanimously elected as a Member of the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR).

(b) Some of the notable scientific findings include:

(i) Occurrences of geomagnetic storms in Antarctica;

(ii) Unusual radiowave transmission characteristics in Antarctica;

(iii) Peculiar chemical characteristics of the seas around Antarctica;

(iv) Occurrence of an undersea mount;

(v) Knowledge of the weather pattern during the winter period using an automatic, solar-powered, unmanned weather station established by India during the first expedition.

(vi) New microoragnisms which could have imprints of the primitive cell as they lived in the past during the glacial age at sub-zero conditions.

(c) Yes, Sir. The planning and preparation of the fifth expedition is under way and will take into account both the aspects.

Loss of Forest Cover

2781. SHRI VITHALRAO MADHAVRAO JADHAV:
PROF B. RAMACHANDRA RAO:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) what is the area under forestry cover in the country the rate of loss and area planted during the last three years;

(b) whether Government have any long range plan to cover earge barren lands with forests; and

(c) if so, what target has been fixed upto the end of 2000 AD and during the Seventh Plan period?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI VIR SEN): (a) The area registered as forest in the country is 74.87 million hectares as on 31-12-1983. The annual rate of loss of forest cover during the last five years, on account of diversion of forest land to non-forest use under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 is about 6500 ha. No information is available in regard to forest cover lost on account of illicit felling and encroachment. The total area planted during the last five years is 4.65 million hectares.

(b) and (c) Government have set up a National Wastelands Development Board with the object of bringing 5 million hectares of land every year under fuelwood and fodder plantations. No target has been fixed for the period ending 2000 AD. The Seventh Five Year Plan proposals are yet to be finalised.

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2782. SHRI S. W. DHABE:
SHRI ASHWANI KUMAR:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal under Government's consideration to restart